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Letter dated 30 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a letter dated 30 April 2001 and its annexes from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nagorny Karabakh, Ms. Naira Melkounian, addressed to you.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under item 30 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Movses **Abelian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/56/50.

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Annex I to the letter dated 30 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

In connection with the recent circulation as a document of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council of the text of the statement made by the President of Azerbaijan at the negotiations on a Karabakh settlement held in Key West on 3 April 2001 presenting the Azerbaijani version of the history and prehistory of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, I believe that it is necessary to state the following. The authorities of the Republic of Nagorny Karabakh have always sought to refrain from discussing the problems of the past in the belief that this is unproductive as far as the search for a solution to the Karabakh problem is concerned and that the sides should concentrate their efforts, first and foremost, on building a peaceful and stable future for the region. Although it is, of course, undeniable that the current state of the Caucasus is weighed down, in many respects, by the heavy historical legacy resulting from the region's having been for centuries a geopolitical crossroads where the interests of various powers — Persian, Ottoman, Russian, Soviet — clashed.

However, it must regrettably be noted that our opponents are adhering to entirely the opposite position, waging an ever more active propaganda campaign and provoking us into sterile polemics. A fresh example of this is the aforementioned statement made by the President of Azerbaijan in Key West, in which he essentially reaffirmed the policy formulated by him back at the beginning of 1999: "We must continue in the future to create such works so that they will demonstrate invariably and consistently that the lands where Armenia is now situated belong to Azerbaijan. We must do this. We must open up the way for future generations" (*Bakinsky rabochy*, 11 February 1999).

This official State strategy of Azerbaijan was also reflected in the aforementioned statement by Heydar Aliyev, fully confirming our fears. In order to prevent in future the one-sided interpretation of the events of the past, which is fraught with negative consequences for the future of the south Caucasus, and to establish an objective historical basis for searching for a settlement to the conflict, we consider it necessary to submit a memorandum setting forth the indisputable scientific facts concerning the history of the region alongside their Azerbaijani interpretation. We should be extremely grateful if this memorandum were circulated as an official document of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.

(*Signed*) Naira **Melkounian**

Annex II to the letter dated 30 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Memorandum

Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Transcaucasia

Azerbaijan's version

The Armenian community arrived recently in Transcaucasia, Armenians appeared in the region in the nineteenth century. "Following the signing between Russia and Iran of the Giulistan and Turkmenchai peace treaties, mass settlement by Armenians began in the historically Azerbaijani lands, and a policy aimed at creating an Armenian State was pursued in the south Caucasus. Simultaneously, a process of banishing and deporting Azerbaijanis from lands that had been theirs since time immemorial was implemented".[1] The Chairman of the Milli Mejlis, Aleskerov, said that "the genocide of Azerbaijanis has been under way since the beginning of the nineteenth century, since the time of the signing between Russia and Iran of the Treaties of Giulistan and Turkmenchai, since the time of the migration of Armenians from Iran and other countries of the Near East to Azerbaijan, in particular, Karabakh, Erevan and Nakhichevan".[2]

The facts

According to the testimony of the classical authors Herodotus (fifth century BC), Strabo (first century BC) and others, the north-eastern border of Armenia was the river Kura. Nagorny Karabakh was part of the tenth province of Armenia, Artsakha. The creator of the Armenian written language, Mesrop Mashtots, founded the first school in Armenia with instruction based on the new Armenian alphabet (in 405) in the Amaras Monastery in the Martuni district of Nagorny Karabakh.

Another fact refuting Azerbaijan's fantasies that the Armenian community appeared in the region only in the nineteenth century is the correspondence of the Armenian princes of Karabakh over the course of many years with the Russian court and certain European powers, which began in the first quarter of the eighteenth century and has been preserved in document form.[3] During the period of Persian rule, in order to develop handicrafts in Iran, many Karabakh craftsmen were sent, along with their families, to various regions of Iran. After the annexation of Armenia and Karabakh to Russia, they began to return to their homeland.

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[1] Address by the President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, to the Azerbaijani people, *Bakinsky rabochy*, 30 March 2000, p. 1.

[2] Presentation in the Milli Mejlis of the book *Tragicheskie stranitsy nashei istorii: genotsid*, 1 April 2001.

[3] See Russian Foreign Policy Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, fnd.100, Cent. Asia, 1739, d.2, sh.62; fnd.100, Cent. Asia, 1724, d.4, sh.17; fnd.100, Cent. Asia, 1724, d.4, sh.16; Central State Archives of Ancient Documents, fnd. Office of Peter the Great, sect. II, bk.66, sh.541-541; fnd. Office of Peter the Great, sect.II, bk.66, sh.520; S. A. Mamedov, *Istoricheskie svyazi azerbaidjanskogo i armyanskogo naroda (vtoraya polovina XVII v. i pervaya tret XVIII v.)*, Baku, 1977, pp. 216-239.

Information regarding this is also to be found in the writings of Azerbaijani historians.[4] The famous Russian writer and public figure, Russia's ambassador to Persia, A. S. Griboedov, perished because of the assistance that he provided for this process. As for the Turkic tribes from whom the modern-day Azerbaijani community is descended, they began to arrive in Transcaucasia between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries of the Common Era.[5] They appeared in Nagorny Karabakh only in the last third of the eighteenth century[6] and never constituted more than 3 to 4 per cent of the population, right up to the incorporation of Nagorny Karabakh into Azerbaijan in 1921.

The largest wave of migration to Transcaucasia by a Turkic-speaking population occurred, however, at the end of the nineteenth century. It is appropriate to cite, in this connection, some data from Azerbaijani history. "In 1897, the Azerbaijani population in the territory of Baku and Elizavetopol *gubernii* numbered about 1 million persons. However, according to data that are far from complete, from 1880, the number of seasonal workers from the north-western provinces of southern Azerbaijan alone was between 30,000 and 35,000 persons per year. In reality, there were far more: many seasonal workers did not obtain consular arrival certificates or passports and crossed the frontier illegally. The districts of Velkidzh and Ardebil alone each provided almost 20,000 seasonal workers per year, that is one person on average from every peasant homestead. The majority of seasonal workers from southern Azerbaijan settled in enterprises in Baku".[7] It turns out that, according to data that are far from complete, out of 1 million Azerbaijanis living in Baku and Elizavetopol *gubernii*, at least 600,000 (60 per cent) had come from the territory of Iran, beginning in 1880. In fact, the number is even higher, as Azerbaijani academics themselves confirm. The very name "Azerbaijan", as applied to the territory of modern-day Azerbaijan, appeared only in 1918, when the "Musavat" party, which had come to power in Baku, was pursuing the goal of legitimizing its subsequent claims to the contiguous provinces of Iran (western and eastern Azerbaijan). The ethnic classification "Azerbaijanis" appeared only in the 1930s. Prior to this, they were referred to as "Caucasian Tatars" or "Turks" in all Russian and Soviet sources.

Armenians and Azerbaijanis during the period of the Soviet Union

Azerbaijan's version

The leaders of the Soviet Union conducted a policy of deporting Azerbaijanis. "With the help of Soviet Russia, Zangezur and a number of other Azerbaijani lands were declared the territory of Armenia. Through a decision by the leaders of the USSR, who were carrying out a policy of discrimination against the Turkic Muslim

[4] *Istoria Azerbaidjana (v 3-kh tomakh)* edited by the academicians I. A. Guseinov, A. S. Sumbatzade and others, Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR, Baku, 1960, vol. 2 – "*Ot prisoedinenica Azerbaijana k Rossii do fevralskoy burzhuazno-demokraticheskoy revolyutsii 1917 goda*", pp. 22-23.

[5] *Istoria Azerbaidjana*, 1958, vol. 1 – "*Sdrevneishikh vremen do prisoedinenia Azerbaijana k Rossii*", pp. 140, 170-172, 202 and 204.

[6] Ibid., p. 337.

[7] *Istoria Azerbaidjana*, vol. 2, pp. 253, 261 and 262.

republics, Armenians achieved the mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical lands during the period from 1948 to 1953 at the State level".[8]

The facts

In 1918, Armenia became an independent republic. Its territory at that time comprised approximately 60,000 square kilometres.[9] Subsequently, the Bolsheviks and Turkey, having imposed on Armenia the Moscow Treaty of 1921, dismembered it, whereby Azerbaijan was given considerable territory, including Nakhichevan together with the contiguous districts. Having also seized Nagorny Karabakh from Armenia, the Bolsheviks reduced the territory of Armenia to 29,800 square kilometres. In addition, "in terms of national composition, the population in Armenia is considerably more homogenous than in Georgia and Azerbaijan. According to the 1922 census, Armenians constitute 85.98 per cent, Turkic and Persian peoples together — 9.8 per cent, and Russians — 2.45 per cent. National minorities lived scattered throughout Armenia and taken together do not exceed 19 per cent in any *uyezd*. The predominant nationality, in contrast to Georgia and Azerbaijan, is represented in the cities to a larger degree, than in villages: Armenians in the cities constitute 91.7 per cent of the population, and in villages 84.7 per cent".[9] In addition, "the civil war during the period 1917-1920, which to a considerable extent was complicated in Azerbaijan by the national factor, led to significant displacements of the population tending mainly to reduce the size of national minorities. Thus, for example, the Russian population diminished from 200,000 in 1913 to 120,000 in 1921. The same mass displacement also occurred among the Armenian population, which earlier constituted rather large islands along the general Turkic population, numbering overall 73,526 persons in the Shemakha, Geokchai, Agdash, Nukhi, Sheki *uyezds*; by 1921 of them there remained a total of 12,716 persons". [10]

History of the origin of the conflict

Azerbaijan's version

> "This conflict arose in connection with territorial claims concerning Azerbaijan on the part of Armenia, which was attempting to seize and annex part of the land that has been Azerbaijani since time immemorial — Nagorny Karabakh. It began in 1988, when Armenia and Azerbaijan were still Union Republics within the Soviet Union. However, as a result of the unjust position taken by the leaders of the Soviet Union with regard to Azerbaijan and, possibly, also an unwillingness to avert the conflict, it developed further and expanded into a war. I should like to point out that, in 1921, the Azerbaijani Government granted the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan the status of an autonomous region, and it enjoyed all the rights of autonomy. Therefore, there were no objective reasons for the start of this conflict."[11]

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[8] Address by the President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, to the Azerbaijani people, *Bakinsky rabochy*, 30 March 2000, p. 1.

[9] *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, vol., III, section on the Armenian SSR, 1926, p. 419.

[10] Ibid., vol. I, section on the Azerbaijani SSR, 1926, p. 642.

[11] Statement of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Heydar Alivey, made at the meeting of the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Colin Powell, with the Presidents of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia and the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group in Key West, Florida, on 3 April 2001.

The facts

The League of Nations included the question of Nagorny Karabakh on the agenda of the Paris Peace Conference, basing its decision, inter alia, on the 1919 Agreement between the National Council of Nagorny Karabakh and the Government of Azerbaijan, in which the parties agreed that the question of Nagorny Karabakh must be resolved at the Paris Peace Conference.[12] On the very next day after the establishment of Soviet power in Armenia, Azerbaijan twice — on 30 November and then 1 December 1920 — declared its refusal to put forward any claims to all disputed territories, including Nagorny Karabakh. On 4 July 1921, at the plenary session of the Caucasus Bureau of the Russian Communist Party, a proposal by the Azerbaijani side to include Nagorny Karabakh within Azerbaijan was rejected, and a decision was taken to include Nagorny Karabakh in Armenia. It was decided to hold a plebiscite only in Nagorny Karabakh. However, on 5 July 1921, under pressure from Stalin a plenary session of the Caucasus Bureau adopted, without discussion and a vote, a resolution under which Nagorny Karabakh was included in Azerbaijan. Precisely this illegal decision taken without lawful authority by a regional party organ of the Bolsheviks and adopted without taking any account of the will of the Karabakh population, to this day enables the leaders of Azerbaijan to impart legitimacy to their claims to Karabakh and other Armenian territories.

Prior to 1988, the question of reuniting Karabakh with Armenia was raised in the 1920s, 1940s and 1960s. Throughout the entire period in which Nagorny Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan that Republic's authorities conducted a discriminatory policy, which became particularly pronounced when Heydar Aliyev came into power. "One can state without exaggeration that, only after Heydar Aliyev assumed the leadership of Azerbaijan, the Karabakh Azerbaijanis felt that they were the complete masters of the area. In the 1970s, considerable work was being carried out there. All this led to an influx into Nagorny Karabakh of the Azerbaijani population from surrounding districts — Lachin, Agdam, Djebrail, Fizuli, Agjabedi and others. All these measures, carried out thanks to the foresight of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, favoured the influx of the Azerbaijani population. Whereas in 1970 the proportion of Azerbaijanis in the population of the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region amounted to 18 per cent, in 1979 it was 23 per cent, and in 1989 it exceeded 30 per cent".[13] From 1926 to 1980, 85 Armenian villages (30 per cent) and not a single Azerbaijani village had disappeared in Nagorny Karabakh. Between the censuses from 1970 to 1979, the size of the Armenian population in the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region had increased by 1.7 per cent (2,000 persons), while the number of Azerbaijanis had increased by 37 per cent (10,000 persons). Over a period of 40 years (1939-1978), the number of Azerbaijanis in the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region had increased 2.6 times, while the number of Armenians had diminished by 7.3 per cent. In 20 years (1959-1979), the number of Azerbaijanis in Armenia had increased by 49 per cent, while the number of Armenians in Azerbaijan had grown by only 7.5 per cent. The rate of natural increase of the population in the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region was one of

[12] "*League of Nations*", *Records of the First Assembly*, Meetings of Committee II, Geneva, 1920, pp. 173 and 174; "*K istorii obrazovania Nagorno-Karabakhskoy Avtonomnoy Oblasti Azerbaijanskoy SSR (1918-1925)*", documents and materials, Baku, 1989, pp. 23-25.

[13] Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Ramil Ulsubov, "*Nagorny Karabakh, missia spasenia nachinalas b 70-e gody*", *Panorama*, 12 May 1999.

the highest in the USSR. Accordingly, in 1955, it constituted 25.1 per 1,000 inhabitants, in 1956 — 28.8, and in 1961 — 32.[14] The Armenian population completely disappeared in various regions of Azerbaijan, particularly in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic.

Azerbaijan's chauvinistic policy was accompanied by the destruction of Armenian historical and cultural monuments throughout the territory of Azerbaijan. A glaring example of this was the Dadivank Monastery in the Kelbajar district. "The local Muslim population regarded it as a remnant of the Armenian Christian religion and destroyed it as much as it could. I appealed at the time — this was in the middle of the 1980s — to the First Secretary of the Kelbajar district committee requesting him to halt the destruction of monuments. The reply that I heard is something that disturbs me even now: 'What is this Armenian monastery have to do with you?'"[15]

The legal side of the Karabakh conflict

Azerbaijan's arguments to the effect that Nagorny Karabakh belongs to it are unconvincing also from the legal point of view. When the Azerbaijan Republic was recognized by the international community in 1992, Nagorny Karabakh was not part of it. On 10 December 1991, the people of Nagorny Karabakh, in compliance with all the laws of the USSR in effect at that time and the norms of international law, including the USSR Law on the procedure for deciding questions related to the secession of a Union Republic from the USSR, which was adopted on 3 April 1990 and gives the right to autonomous entities and nationalities concentrated in specific areas to decide independently the question of their State legal status in cases involving the secession of a Union Republic from the Soviet Union, expressed their desire for independence in a referendum with the presence of international observers on 30 August 1991, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan declared the restoration of the State independence of the Azerbaijani Republic of 1918-1920. Nagorny Karabakh, however, was not part of the independent Azerbaijani Republic of 1918-1920, which was confirmed by the League of Nations. Nagorny Karabakh was transferred by Soviet power to Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, official Baku, having adopted the Constitutional Act on the State Independence of the Azerbaijani Republic on 18 August 1991, declared the illegality of the establishment of Soviet power and rejected the Soviet legal and political legacy. In doing so, Baku itself in fact recognized as illegal the 70-year-long forceful retention of Nagorny Karabakh within the Azerbaijani SSR.

25 April 2000

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[14] *"Dostizhenia Sovetskogo NK za 40 let v tsifrakh"*, statistical collection, Stepanakert, 1963, p. 39.

[15] Haji Iskander, *"Lel kala — takaya blizkaya i takaya nedosyagalmaya krepost"*, *Vyskha* No. 10, pp. 16-23, March 2000.